

## Innovative Employment Practices

**T**he Office of Human Resources and Administration provided policy and guidance to VA managers and employees on initiatives to create a “family-friendly” work environment. The VA policy on alternative workplace arrangements, flexplace, or telecommuting gives employees and managers the opportunity to perform their work at home or from community-based telecenters. These new arrangements give VA the ability to improve productivity, provide more efficient services to veterans, and help make VA a family-friendly workplace.

### Human Resources and Payroll Services

The Assistant Secretary for Human Resources and Administration shares responsibility with the Assistant Secretary for Financial Management for funding and overseeing the HR LINK\$ Project. The Project is a Department-wide initiative to reengineer HR/Payroll processes and to automate the delivery of HR/Payroll services. Currently, Employee Self Service is being rolled out VA-wide and is expected to be completed in the spring of 2000. This feature will enable employees to perform 20 personal transactions from a touch-tone telephone, an office personal computer, or a personal computer in a conveniently located HR LINK\$ “Access Point.” Some of the transactions include review/election/change of their name, address, health/life insurance, TSP, Savings Bonds, and taxes.

Also in process is a VA-wide Position Classification expert system. The majority of

VA managers are now able to prepare and classify their own positions using this system, and a VA-wide rollout will be completed in late spring of 2000. Work is in progress to develop and test Manager Self Service, a function that allows managers to initiate personnel actions from their desktop computer, as well as develop and test a staffing expert system.

### Workforce Diversity

During FY 1999, VA's permanent full-time, part-time, and intermittent workforce decreased by 1.51 percent, from 199,533 to 196,520. The representation of minorities in VA's workforce increased from 35.5 percent to 35.9 percent and continued to far exceed the minority representation of 22.10 percent

in the civilian labor force. Asian Pacific Islander representation increased from 4.9 percent to 5.1 percent. The overall representation of women in VA's workforce increased from 53.7 percent to 57 percent. Specifically, the representation of women in GS-13 and above positions increased from 32 percent to 34 percent. Representation of two minority groups in

the VA workforce remained stable—Native Americans at 0.8 percent and people with targeted disabilities at 1.8 percent. The overall representation of Hispanics in the permanent workforce was stable at 5.9 percent. However, the representation of Hispanics in VA's total workforce increased to 6.07 percent. Also, VA sponsored 93 internships for Hispanic students during the summer and fall of 1999.



Human Resources and Payroll  
System for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

Under the Work Force Recruitment Program for College Students with Disabilities Program, VA hired ten students with disabilities for summer employment and retained three of these students as full-time employees at the end of the summer program. As of December 31, 1999, under the Welfare-to-Work Program, VA far exceeded the goal of 800 by hiring 1,442 individuals at medical facilities, regional offices, national cemeteries, and headquarters since the program's inception in March 1997.

### Work Environment

The Office of Resolution Management (ORM) is undertaking a study to identify trends in discrimination complaints. The results will be provided to VA managers and employees on the perceptions of discrimination and the root causes of discrimination complaints. ORM has published several Root Cause Reports, which is posted on ORM's web page at <http://www.va.gov/orm/>. ORM will continue to clearly articulate preventive methodologies, accountability, and the meaning of discrimination. VA continued to reaffirm its commitment toward creating and maintaining a high-performing workforce by improving the discrimination complaint process and its effectiveness in eradicating discrimination in the workplace.

The Office of Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) and the Department of Labor's Office of Workers' Compensation Programs (OWCP) have recently implemented a system that permits the electronic submission of occupational injury and illness claims from VA to OWCP. The Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) system will reduce mail time, provide immediate case receipt feedback from OWCP, reduce form completion errors and inconsistencies, and simplify injury and illness case coding.

During 1999, Security and Law Enforcement (OS&LE) completed work on a Firearms Implementation Program which received the approval of the Secretary in March 1999. OS&LE has finalized the development of updated policies and procedures to govern the firearm program, and is in the final stages of development of a national contract to procure the appropriate pistols. Sixteen VA medical centers were chosen to participate as "phase one" of firearms implementation. OS&LE has been working very closely with those facilities in preparing them for the addition of firearms into their police programs.

Background checks are being updated and extensive training is being conducted with the participating police officers prior to their being authorized to carry firearms on duty.

The Department's Continuity of Operations (COOP) Plan was developed and completed in October 1999, within the 1-year time frame mandated by Presidential Decision Directive 67. The goal of the Department's COOP Plan is to ensure a viable continuity of VA operations under all circumstances and a wide range of possible threats.

